



STATE OF MINNESOTA
L'Étoile du Nord

Office of Governor Mark Dayton
& Lt. Governor Tina Smith

Investing in Minnesota Farm Families and Agricultural Communities

Minnesota farmers and rural communities are essential to the strength of our economy. Agriculture is the state's 2nd-largest employer, supporting over 340,000 jobs and creating \$90 billion in economic activity across Minnesota every year. Minnesota also is the nation's 4th-largest agricultural exporting state, selling over \$7.3 billion in high-quality agricultural products on the global market. The hard-working families who own and operate 74,000 Minnesota farms, totaling 26 million acres across our state, deserve our thanks, our partnership, and our continued commitment to making their communities even stronger.

During the 2017 Legislative Session, Governor Mark Dayton and Lt. Governor Tina Smith worked with the Legislature to make bipartisan investments that will help Minnesota's farm families and strengthen rural communities. Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith understand how important these investments are at a time when farm incomes have dropped and expenses have risen. The following is summary of recent investments that will benefit Minnesota farm families.

To learn more about the Agriculture Budget enacted this session, [CLICK HERE](#). To learn more about the Tax Bill enacted this session, [CLICK HERE](#). To learn more about the E-12 Education Bill enacted this session, [CLICK HERE](#). To learn more about the Higher Education Bill enacted this session, [CLICK HERE](#). For a full list of fact sheets explaining the overall state budget enacted this session, [CLICK HERE](#).

Supporting Minnesota Farmers and Agricultural Communities

Critical Funding for Minnesota's Rural Finance Authority

Delivering needed assistance to Minnesota's 74,000 farms, Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature this year to invest \$35 million in Minnesota's Rural Finance Authority. This funding will allow the Authority to continue offering eligible Minnesota farmers affordable financing and terms and conditions not offered by other traditional lenders. Without this investment, some farmers would have faced a credit crunch caused by several years of low commodity prices and rising expenses.

<p>Funding to Maintain Essential Services for Minnesota Farmers</p>	<p>The budget signed by Governor Dayton invests \$2.3 million to fully fund the services Minnesota farmers rely on through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Minnesota Board of Animal Health (BAH) and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI). These agencies help support Minnesota farmers, providing research, assistance, agribusiness growth, and other resources.</p>
<p>Protecting Minnesota Crops from Pests and Diseases</p>	<p>Governor Dayton and the Legislature this year invested \$500,000 to enhance the Department of Agriculture’s capacity to protect our crops from pests and diseases.</p>
<p>Keeping Noxious Weeds Away from Minnesota Crops</p>	<p>Governor Dayton and the Legislature invested \$850,000 to address noxious weeds that threaten Minnesota crops, including grants to local weed inspectors to address noxious weeds at the local level.</p>
<p>One-on-One Assistance for Minnesota Farmers</p>	<p>The budget signed by Governor Dayton provides \$80,000 to increase the capacity of the Farm Advocates initiative, which provides one-on-one assistance for farmers who face natural disasters or other financial challenges. Farm Advocates understand the needs of farming families and are trained and experienced in agricultural lending practices, farm programs, mediation, and disaster relief, among other assistance.</p>
<p>Free Disposal of Waste Pesticides</p>	<p>The budget signed by Governor Dayton increases funding for the Waste Pesticide Collection Program, which provides safe disposal of waste pesticides at no cost to Minnesotans. This program has been a great success, collecting more than 450,000 pounds of household and agricultural waste pesticides in all 87 counties.</p>
<p>Growing New Markets for Minnesota Farmers</p>	<p>Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature this year to invest \$400,000 in the Industrial Hemp Development Program, to help grow new market opportunities for Minnesota farmers.</p>
<p>Farmer-Lender Mediation</p>	<p>Minnesota farmers who are facing debt have the opportunity to renegotiate, restructure, or resolve their farm debt through Farmer-Lender Mediation. The agriculture budget signed this year by Governor Dayton extends the Farmer-Lender Mediation Program, providing important assistance to Minnesota farmers who are facing low commodity prices and high input costs.</p>

<p>Improving Tractor Safety</p>	<p>According to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the leading cause of work-related deaths for Minnesota farmers is tractor rollovers. A farmer is 800 percent more likely to die while working than people in other jobs. To help address the safety challenges that face farmers every day, the Governor and Legislature invested \$150,000 this session in the Tractor Safety Rollover Program, which makes tractor safety equipment more affordable.</p>
<p>Supporting Agriculture Research and Market Development</p>	<p>Minnesota’s Agriculture Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) Fund helps agricultural producers remain technologically and economically competitive by providing direct grants to farmers for livestock improvement, biofuels, and developing new markets and value-added products. This year, Governor Dayton and the Legislature invested an additional \$14.2 million to support Minnesota farmers and agricultural producers.</p>
<p>\$20 Million for Rural Broadband Infrastructure</p>	<p>About 22 percent of Minnesotans in rural areas lack access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet. This year, Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith worked with the Legislature to secure \$20 million to further expand broadband access for Greater Minnesota households, students, and businesses. This investment builds on \$66 million Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith have invested in broadband expansion since 2014. Thus far, broadband investments secured by Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith have provided better access to high-speed internet for 25,949 Minnesota households, 3,176 businesses, and 244 community institutions.</p>

Investing in Farm Family Budgets

<p>Cutting Property Taxes for Minnesota Farmers</p>	<p>Farm property taxes in Minnesota have increased 114 percent in the last decade. This problem has been compounded by low commodity prices and high agricultural land values. To help relieve property tax burdens on Minnesota farmers, Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith worked with the Legislature to provide a tax credit worth \$35 million for owners of agricultural property. The credit is equal to 40 percent of farm property taxes attributable to school district debt levies.</p>
<p>Beginning Farmer Incentive Program</p>	<p>The average Minnesota farmer is 55 years-old. Currently only 4 percent of Minnesota farmers are younger than 35 years of age, while research shows the greatest barrier to entry for young farmers is access to land. This year, Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature to create a first-of-its-kind \$5 million tax incentive program to help beginning Minnesota farmers get started and have access to land. As many of Minnesota’s farmers hit retirement age, the tax incentive will help the next generation of farmers acquire and rent land.</p>

<p>Local Government/County Program Aid</p>	<p>Minnesotans rely on their city and county governments to provide essential services like police and fire protection. This year, Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature to provide cities an additional \$15 million and counties an additional \$25 million to support these important community services, while relieving the need for local governments to significantly increase property taxes in rural communities.</p>
---	--

Making Health and Child Care More Affordable

<p>Making Child Care More Affordable</p>	<p>Minnesota’s Child Care Assistance Program provides financial assistance to help low-income working families pay for child care. This funding makes a profound difference for parents and their children – allowing parents to pursue education or work, while helping Minnesota kids access high-quality child care. This year, the Governor and Legislature allocated \$18.6 million to remove red tape for families and providers. This investment will improve care for more than 30,000 children from low-income families.</p> <p>Additionally, Governor Dayton and the Legislature invested \$35.8 million to expand Minnesota’s Child Care Tax Credit. This is expected to help 55,900 total families, while providing more than 42,800 Minnesota families an average additional tax saving of \$342 a year.</p>
<p>Supporting Minnesota’s Home Care Professionals</p>	<p>Minnesota’s approximately 100,000 personal care professionals provide critical care for our parents, grandparents, and friends and relatives with disabilities. Low wages, however, have forced many home care professionals in Minnesota to find second jobs, or leave their positions for higher paying industries. This year, the Governor and Legislature invested \$24 million for Minnesota’s home care workers to help attract and retain a quality workforce, thereby improving the lives and care options of elderly Minnesotans and people with disabilities.</p>
<p>Health Insurance Premium Relief for Farmers on the Individual Market</p>	<p>This session, Governor Dayton and the Minnesota Legislature delivered immediate health insurance premium relief for over 105,000 Minnesotans – including farmers – who purchase their health insurance on the individual market. The program provides eligible Minnesotans with a 25 percent discount on their health insurance premiums throughout 2017. The program is open to Minnesotans who are enrolled in the individual insurance market, who fulfilled their monthly premium payment, are not participants of any Minnesota public health care programs, and do not receive federal subsidies through an advance premium tax credit on their monthly bill. CLICK HERE to learn more.</p>

**Governor Dayton's
Proposed
MinnesotaCare
Buy-In (Not Enacted)**

Since 1992, MinnesotaCare has offered high-quality, lower-cost health coverage for over 100,000 Minnesotans. Governor Dayton's proposal would have built on MinnesotaCare's bipartisan success – giving all Minnesotans who purchase their insurance on the individual market the choice to buy-into MinnesotaCare, and pay their own way for their coverage.

MinnesotaCare Buy-In would have cost, on average, an estimated \$469 per person per month in 2018. That is 13 percent less than the average \$538 per month for commercial health plans in 2017. On top of those savings, Minnesotans who purchase MinnesotaCare Buy-In would still be eligible for federal tax credits through MNSure. This year, 64 percent of MNSure enrollees received tax credits, averaging about \$621 per month, or \$7,457 per year.

Unfortunately, the Minnesota Legislature was unwilling to consider Governor Dayton's MinnesotaCare Buy-In proposal. Instead, the Legislature decided to send insurance companies \$542 million of taxpayer money, without any guarantee that the funding will lower costs for consumers. Governor Dayton will continue to advocate for MinnesotaCare Buy-In next year.

[\[Fact Sheet\]](#) | [\[FAQs\]](#) | [\[Myth vs. Fact\]](#)

Delivering Financial Assistance for Water Quality Protection Efforts

**Funding for Landowners
Implementing Water
Quality Protections**

This year, the Governor and Legislature worked together to invest \$61.5 million in the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP), with funding from the bonding bill (\$10 million), the state's Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund (\$19 million), the Outdoor Heritage Fund (\$15.7 million), and the Clean Water Fund (\$16.25 million).

The state funding to-date will unlock an additional \$271.3 million in federal funding, which the Governor secured in January, to provide direct assistance to Minnesota farmers and landowners who implement buffers, restore wetlands, and protect wellheads for drinking water. If Minnesota provides an additional \$33.7 million in state funding, another \$78.7 million in federal funding would become available for MN CREP conservation efforts.

<p>Strong Clean Water Buffer Protections and More Flexibility for Farmers</p>	<p>The November 2017 deadline to install water quality buffers on lands adjacent to public waters, and the November 2018 deadline for lands adjacent to public ditches, will not change. However, Governor Dayton worked with lawmakers to give additional flexibility to farmers and landowners who require financial and technical assistance to comply with the clean water buffer standards and are making good faith efforts with their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).</p> <p>Landowners who cannot meet the first deadline may commit to a compliance plan with their local SWCD by November 1, 2017 and then have until July 1, 2018 to implement their buffer or alternative practice. These waivers will offer landowners up to eight months to work with their local SWCD to implement buffers and alternative practices. The law on alternative practices now includes the common practices adopted and published by the Board of Water Soil Resources, or practices approved by the local SWCD consistent with the Field Office Technical Guide.</p> <p>To learn more about Minnesota’s clean water buffer standards, visit mn.gov/buffer-law</p>
<p>Financial Aid for Local Governments to Implement Clean Water Buffers</p>	<p>Clean water buffer strips help keep pollutants like phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment out of our water by absorbing them before they enter our lakes, rivers, and streams. The Governor and the Legislature this year provided \$8 million in aid for 2018 and \$10 million annually thereafter for buffer implementation and enforcement at the local level.</p>
<p>Additional Resources to Help Farmers Meet Clean Water Buffer Standards</p>	<p>The Governor and Legislature this session approved Clean Water Funds to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for a new buffer cost-share program, allocating almost \$5 million to support landowners and farmers in meeting the requirements of the state buffer law. The funds will be distributed to soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) and are to be used for cost-sharing contracts with landowners or their authorized agents to implement buffers or alternative practices.</p> <p>The state also launched a new one-stop website this summer (mn.gov/buffer-law) to serve as a resource for Minnesota farmers and landowners who have questions about buffers, financial assistance for buffer installations, technical assistance, alternative practices, and compliance waivers.</p>
<p>Developing Next Generation of Clean Water Crops</p>	<p>This year, the Governor and Legislature secured \$1.5 million to develop the next generation of clean water crops. The University of Minnesota will use the funding to develop economically viable cover and perennial crops. Integrating more perennials and cover crops into row crop production will help protect the state’s water quality, while increasing productivity and profitability for Minnesota farmers.</p>

Investing in Minnesota Students and Agriculture Education

Helping Rural Schools Access High-Speed Internet	<p>Too many students in Greater Minnesota communities are on the wrong side of the digital divide, lacking access to the same educational opportunities as their friends and family in the cities. This year, Lt. Governor Tina Smith and the Minnesota Department of Education announced \$500,000 in grants to help 11 school districts in Greater Minnesota provide students with wireless access at home and while riding the school bus. With the funding, the districts were able to equip school buses with wireless hotspots, enabling students to complete homework while riding home. The districts also were able to purchase wireless hotspots, data cards, and other mobile broadband devices for home use by students.</p>
Investing in Agriculture Education	<p>Minnesota’s agricultural industry is expected to face a workforce shortage in coming years. Our state currently lacks enough agricultural educators to introduce students to opportunities in the agriculture industry and help them get the training they need to be successful.</p> <p>This year, Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature to create a matching grant program, so that Ag educators can work with students in the summer. The Governor and Legislature also provided \$100,000 for a new Ag Educator Loan Forgiveness program and \$750,000 for a Large Animal Veterinarian Loan Forgiveness program to help recent graduates pay down debt.</p>
Investing in Strong Schools and Student Success Across Minnesota	<p>Minnesota currently ranks 19th out of the 50 states in per-pupil funding for our students. When Governor Dayton was elected in 2010, he committed to investing in better opportunities for Minnesota students every year – no excuses, no exceptions. Governor Dayton kept that promise again this session, working with the Legislature to increase basic school funding by 2 percent in each of the next two years to ensure better opportunities for every student and family, everywhere in Minnesota.</p> <p>In total, this budget invests an additional \$483 million in E-12 education over the next two years. That means since 2011, Governor Dayton has worked with the Legislature to invest nearly \$2 billion in E-12 education – making important progress to help ensure every child receives a world class education in our public schools.</p>

<p>Investing in High Quality PreKindergarten</p>	<p>High-quality early learning programs have impressive, long-lasting benefits, including higher graduation and employment rates, and decreased incarceration rates. Governor Dayton and the Legislature previously increased funding for Early Learning Scholarships to \$60 million per year and added \$25 million annually for voluntary Prekindergarten programs in our public schools – benefiting thousands of students statewide.</p> <p>This session, Governor Dayton, and the Legislature continued those important investments in Early Learning Scholarships and voluntary preKindergarten. They invested an additional \$50 million to be used to expand access to preKindergarten – a top priority of Governor Dayton. They also provided an additional \$20.6 million for early learning scholarships.</p>
<p>Training the Next Generation of Minnesota Teachers</p>	<p>Great teachers can make all the difference for kids, helping them achieve success in school and in life. But each year, Minnesota schools lose an estimated 5,800 teachers to retirement, relocation to other states, and career changes – with Greater Minnesota communities hit especially hard. To expand opportunities for teachers, students, and communities across our state, the Governor and Legislature invested more than \$5 million in teacher workforce programs, including \$1 million in a new Grants to Teacher Candidates program to help interested college students pursue careers in education. The tax bill also includes an income tax credit for licensed K-12 teachers who complete a master’s degree program in their field of licensure.</p>
<p>Investing in Minnesota State Campuses</p>	<p>Minnesota State Colleges and Universities provide 3,700 academic programs at 37 colleges and universities across Minnesota. Minnesota State serves nearly 400,000 students, making it the fifth-largest higher education system in the country. This year, Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature to invest \$106.3 million in the Minnesota State system to ensure our students continue to have access to quality, affordable higher education. Unfortunately, these investments fall short of what is necessary to stop tuition increases.</p>
<p>Increase for the State Grant Program</p>	<p>Today’s economy increasingly requires college or career training. But paying for school can be difficult, especially with many families seeing their incomes remain flat. This year, Governor Dayton worked with the Legislature to invest \$36 million in the Minnesota State Grant Program, which ensures lower- and middle-income families receive direct financial aid to help afford college and career training. At this funding level, grants to each full-time and part-time student recipient would be \$45 to \$1,387 higher than under previous law. The new funding will also allow an additional 4,100 students to receive State Grants. Overall, this program benefits more than 85,000 students.</p>

* * * * *